

STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A composition comprising an isolated collection of mutant *C. elegans* ~~nematodes~~ altered in an ~~osmotic stress resistant~~ (OSR-1[]) gene to reduce ~~or increase~~ sensitivity to osmotic desiccation stress compared to *C. elegans* not altered in said OSR-1 gene, wherein said mutant *C. elegans* comprise a knock-out OSR-1 mutation ~~said mutant nematodes comprising *C. elegans* and nematodes having an OSR-1 gene homologous to the OSR-1 gene of *C. elegans*~~.
2. (currently amended) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said mutant *C. elegans* ~~nematodes~~ comprise a knock-out ~~osmotic stress resistant~~ (OSR-1[]) mutation generated via ethyl methane sulphonate mutagenesis.
3. (currently amended) The composition of Claim 1, wherein said collection of mutant *C. elegans* ~~nematodes~~ is configured for administration to a host.
4. (original) The composition of Claim 3, wherein said host comprises a plant.
5. (original) The composition of Claim 3, wherein said host comprises an animal.
6. (cancelled)
7. (cancelled)
8. (cancelled)
9. (cancelled)
10. (cancelled)
11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) A composition comprising[[;]]
[[a]] a composition comprising small interfering RNA duplex, or vectors
encoding said small interfering RNA duplex, configured to inhibit expression of
C. elegans OSR-1 protein, and a nucleic acid transfecting agent.